

## Changes need change: A psychosociological perspective on participation and social inclusion

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### *Abstract*

This article aims to contribute on the reflection concerning new political measures and complex social demands in democratic systems worldwide. On recognizing the growing fragmentation of social systems and the effects on both social and individual identities, political participatory mechanisms are required to assume the increasing diversity and inequality among social groups and actors in innovative ways. On the basis of my academic and on-the-field experience with participatory practices aimed at including civil society in policymaking processes, I have acknowledged that there is a widespread necessity to look at the ways the relationship between political institutions and citizens can change through participation. I support this view by making reference to some of the findings of my PhD Thesis concerning participatory processes and public administration which put a light on the necessity of social inclusion measures' enhancement.

Organizational and cultural embedding of public sector in participatory policymaking is a key issue in this article in that public policies represent complex chains of processes making sense of citizens and groups' identities and activities. Participatory formulation and/or implementation of public policies cannot help but be related to relational patterning among social groups as well as between political institutions and societies. Understanding the multiple ways through which participation in policymaking can work in different political and social systems, the article proposes an in-depth reflection on the ways change can be achieved by public authorities. Supported by psychosociological theories and within an interdisciplinary approach, the final goal is that of opening the debate on the extents through which governments can effectively coordinate participatory processes towards inclusive goals. Indeed, political institutions are very unlikely to work out effective participatory processes without undergoing extensive cultural transformations and, therefore, ensure high impact on fragmented societies.

**Keywords:** psychosociology; participation; change; social inclusion.

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Falanga, R. (2014). Changes need change: A psychosociological perspective on participation and social inclusion. *Rivista di Psicologia Clinica*, 2, 24-38. doi: 10.14645/RPC.2014.2.471

## ***Participatory processes and social inclusion***

International, national and local scenarios present an increasing complexity in terms of governance, due to complex issues coming from societies and pressures from political and financial entities at multiple scales (EU, 2008; OECD, 2009; UN, 2008). Governments worldwide are demanded to provide new policy instruments which require adequate responses to profound challenges to political and administrative rationales. On the one hand, the emphasis on transparency and accessibility through structural changes in political institutions has aimed to get closer administrative decisions to civil society. On the other hand, the effort to make interaction between citizens and political systems more effective has been sustained by governmental devices, such as administrative decentralization. A new generation of public policies has especially been claiming for institutional integration and the adoption of new strategic approaches capable of taking into account multi-level governing systems at the international scale (Donolo, 2006; Peters & Pierre, 2001, 2012; Sousa Santos, 2006).

Political systems are required to provide adequate spaces for inclusive decision-making involving politicians, civil service systems and society (EU, 2000). The idea of reforming the State in terms of interactive devices and power redistribution started to become an official general claim from the 1990s. In the last few decades, public, semi-private, private, and non-profit bodies as well as citizens, interest groups and enterprises, have come to be (re-)considered as key actors for effective policymaking outcomes (Kohler-Koch, 1998; Rhodes, 1996). In line with New Governance conceptions (Kooiman, 2003; Peters, 2001), Denhardt and Denhardt (2007) have emphasized the necessity to overcome narrow references to either political/legal (Weber, 1947) or like-market principles of new management in public sector (Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). By postulating the model of “New Public Service”, the authors argue that global context is demanding new forms of implementing public policies, so as to make public administrations more responsive to the demands of the environment. Understanding public interest as the result of new possible interactions beyond the mere addition of private interests, political institutions are demanded to foster horizontal models of interaction for effective collaboration, by both downsizing strict hierarchical structures and multiplying decision centers in order to get closer to local instances.

The origin of participatory policymaking is connected to the first experiences aimed to reform political systems in Latin America in the end of 1980s. The replacement of economic resources on behalf of social-justice-oriented investments has made participatory budgeting one of the most important phenomena in this field of new practices. The perception of enlarged participation in decision-making, as well as the attention paid to social inequalities has been considered as an effective way to integrate deliberation into public debate (Avritzer, 2006; Avritzer & Navarro, 2003). Fiscal decentralization and transparency have represented key issues in enabling a more direct relationship of accountability between citizens and local government. In that context, participation has essentially meant re-orientating urban and social inequalities on the basis of governmental needs to reform governance apparatuses (Cabannes, 2004; Sousa Santos, 2003).

Since the first Brazilian experiments, participation has spread exponentially in Latin America first and Europe, Africa and Asia later on. When Europe has started to look at participation as a potential gateway to set up innovative devices for public policies’ formulation and/or implementation, many States have acknowledged the evidence of new social frameworks demanding interactive institutional designs for policymaking with political systems. Drawing an overall difference within Europe, the diffusion of participation has been characterized first by political party involvement in southern Countries such as Spain, Italy and Portugal, with a standing role of left-wing parties. Needs of administrative modernization have rather characterized northern and eastern European Countries, such as Germany, France, England and Belgium (Sintomer, 2005; Sintomer & Allegretti, 2009). In the last two decades a general concern on public sector effectiveness and efficiency has canalized issues of “democratization” through actions of rationalization of the incoming social demands, including those from new spreading social movements (Della Porta, 2011). In these terms, participation has in some cases displayed the role of change by actually playing function of control over social protests while in other cases succeeded in matching goals of redistribution and social inclusion. Several countries in Europe have assumed the opportunity to make participation a device for citizenry trust recovery, less electoral abstention, and effective solutions within increasing uncertainty in complex transnational networks and multi-scale economic, financial and political pressures. As the OECD (2009) has put it:

[g]iven the complexity and scale of emerging governance challenges, governments cannot hope to design effective policy responses, nor to strengthen legitimacy and trust, without the input, ideas and insights of as wide a variety of citizens' voices as possible. Public engagement will increasingly be recognised as another lever of governance – and become part of the standard government toolkit of budgeting, regulatory, e-government and performance management tools (OECD, 2009, p. 17).

Participatory democracy has been conceived as a set of principles and practices aimed at complementing representative democracy, yet different from forms of direct democracy, such as petitions and referendums. Nowadays, participatory democracy includes a wide range of experiences setting new spaces of legitimized deliberation between political institutions and civil society beyond the traditional adversary model of political debate. In social and political sciences, scholars have been compelled to make sense of such a varied scenario. Before the multiplication of approaches and results the very definition of participation has become a challenging work of analysis and reflection (Arnstein, 1971; Bobbio, 2006; Cornwall, 2008; Farrington, Bebbington, & Wellard, 1993; Fung, 2006). On requiring citizen expertise to integrate political and technical expertise, new frameworks of interaction between political and civic societies have demanded profound changes in policymaking rationales.

Worldwide, participation to public decisions in new deliberative arenas has become one of the most widespread new governance phenomena. Mainly at local scale, consultative and co-decisional processes have framed new opportunities for civil society to have a say on and to influence public policymaking towards a varied range of goals, such as reforming public sector as well as enhancing social inclusion<sup>1</sup>. Several examples could be provided on the dissemination of participation in terms of uses, approaches and political areas. One of the key areas of participation is definitely represented by processes aimed at the (re)distribution of resources and investments within budgetary expenditures, such as processes of participatory budgeting (cf. Sintomer & Allegratti, 2009). Participation of civil society and local stakeholders has also been adopted within the field of environmental and urban planning. From initial impulse to implement local processes of “Agenda 21” in 1990s (cf. Aalborg Charter issued in 1994), recent debate has turned the engagement of local actors towards goals of sustainable development even more critical. In these terms, international agencies and public authorities have been compelled to set new agendas (Bina, 2013). Participatory mechanisms have been employed also for goals of social and entrepreneurial inclusion. Public aids for new initiatives, networks, start-ups, as well as the implementation of different combinations of private-public projects have in many cases taken benefit of extended debates on new challenges for social inclusion in Europe (Gaventa & Barret, 2010).

The fragmentation of society and the subsequent isolation of some sectors of society require to critically approach new interactions between political and social systems as well as within the political institutions themselves. Scientific Literature generally pinpoints the risk of exclusion for people under the minimum level of economic and educational resources (Barnes, Newman, Knops, & Sullivan, 2003; Beresford, 2001), as well as social groups such as, *inter alia*, women (McDowell Santos, 2007) and older people (Thornton, 2000)<sup>2</sup>. When participation is explicitly demanded to cope with social inclusion, in terms of governance it

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<sup>1</sup> Participatory processes do not rely on a common theoretical-methodological framework. The inclusion of social actors and stakeholders to policymaking has taken place in different ways, according to a large variety of factors. However, it can be of some help to keep in mind that participation can be alternatively articulated into two distinct families of approaches: consultative and co-decisional. The former family collects those initiatives aimed at gathering opinions, suggestions, and recommendations improving final decisions. The latter includes approaches aimed to provide new actors with quotes of decision-making power (e.g. through vote). Furthermore, it is essential to underline that policymaking processes per se represent all but a linear chain of phases. However public policies analysts agree on the existence of at least two phases: the formulation (identification and definition of problems followed by proposition of solutions to be achieved through the enactment of policies) and the implementation (intervention on the identified problems through the delivery of public services). Though inherently embedded such division is functional to see at what stage participation of new actors takes place. Therefore new actors can be included in either formulation or implementation phase, as well as in the two of them for the same policy.

<sup>2</sup> According to social groups, further insights come up as regards social discrimination. The author of the text is currently analyzing senior citizens' forms of social exclusion and potential enhancement of participation for the FP7 Project MOPACT (<http://mopact.group.shef.ac.uk>). As regards this social group, for example, the most discriminated

implies working towards effective devices of interaction and deliberation. For the reduction of social marginality to pass from general principle on civil society rights' to be part of the participatory mechanisms' goals, some deep changes are needed in policymaking. Governmental systems should first declare whether they intend to walk the way of social inclusion through such mechanisms or not. When this point becomes clear and responsibility is assumed by political representatives, the accomplishment of inclusive goals does require attentive efforts at the administrative level. The formulation and implementation of public policies is not only a matter of political intentions, but also an organizational affair. The coordination of standard vertical lines of rule and new horizontal networks within and over public administration, calls upon the reconfiguration of democratic goals and governance actions to pursue effective policies. Looking at the ways political institutions conceive and work out participatory devices, it is evident that referring to strict bureaucratic rationale shows a narrow pathway towards the accomplishment of participation complex mission. In this sense, internal connections and relationships constructed towards the implementation of participation say something about the different models that sustain the implementation of participation. As a result, it is not a look at the "quality" of participation *per se* as an abstract model or set of good practices, but rather the complex phenomena demanding new political intentions and integrated administrative designs to reveal the deep meanings of participation. The next sessions of the article provide evidence of that.

### ***Political institutions and society***

The history of participation is indissolubly framed within the transformations of the role of the State and, therefore, governments at different scales. When the links between who governs and who is governed become weak, participation is potentially adopted to recover democratic trust and work towards social inclusion. Political institutions own transformative goals once assuming that their overarching mission is the governance of societies in transformation. From the 1970s onwards, social sciences have been paying large attention to organizational cultures spotting the widespread trend to pass from control-based forms of "bureaucratic" logic towards instruments emphasizing the effect of sharing organizational values (Bonazzi, 2002). The focus on cultural traits and features of successful private enterprises and public organizations became a new asset for social sciences. In Japan and USA mainly, the search for new models of interpretation concerning organizational life became a critical challenge<sup>3</sup>. In this scenario, Frost, Moore, Louise, Lundberg, Martin (1985) have proposed three sets of issues giving reason to the affirmation of the cultural perspective in organizational studies: (1) economic difficulties, productivity decline and competition problems with corporations: culture is singled out as a possible tool for achieving better performance; (2) social forces leading to a growing tendency for people to want more from work than simply a paycheck as the quality of work became more important; (3) widespread dissatisfaction with "structural" knowledge produced by standard organization theories: mere quantitative approaches were seen as inappropriate and accused of having produced superficial and irrelevant results.

As precisely regards political institutions, the debate set up by Northern American and Scandinavian new-institutionalist schools from the end of 1970s on, has also focused on organizational and cultural dimensions. One of the principal reasons for this "cultural wave" has been the acknowledgment that ways in which people are either demanded or willed to act, as well as to cope with transformative environments, do not necessarily coincide with what they actually do (Argyris & Schön, 1978). The potential contradiction between the understanding of the reality and the ways reality itself is played and displayed has opened new areas of study in policy analysis too (Yanow, 1996). By approaching formal structures as rational symbols,

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subgroups are: women, individuals with dementia, people with communication impairment, minority ethnic groups, LGBT persons, and people living in rural areas.

<sup>3</sup> It was especially the idea of quality that allowed Japanese philosophy on management to interact with western theories. The control on the product used to be specialized and distinguished from the whole process, fostering the idea of low quality products liable of strict control. Japanese philosophy points out the control on the process and remarks on the passage from mechanical philosophy to social innovation (cf. Ouchi, 1981).

scholars have focused on different aspects of public organizations, such as planning procedures; decision-making processes and rituals; symbolic functions of organizational reforms (Brunsson, 1990; Brunsson & Olsen 1993; March & Olsen 1989). The focus on symbols and cultural elements has aimed to make sense of rational aspects employed and needed to work organizational goals out (Alvesson, 1993; Morgan, 2006).

In this sense, by understanding organizations as shared systems of meanings, culture does not only represent something out of the system, but rather a structural element of organizational identity and behavior. There exists an intrinsic difference between the normative course of action and cultural embedding. People continuously shape and signify organizational environments and it implies using procedures and rationalizing choices while making sense of their actions. Weick (1995) is considered one of the key scholars concerned with symbolical processes within organizations. Culture is meant as both a frame and content of social actors' lifestyles, which constantly manipulate the multiple symbols of their environment. In interpreting different codes and signifying their context, actors actually enact their organizational life. At the same time, they cannot help but construct ambiguous definitions of organizational reality. The author (Weick, 1995) proposes the concept of "sensemaking" as a process especially evident when the working environment looks fairly "implausible" or new "objects" get into ordinary life. The focus is drifted towards the narratives that actors construct in order to legitimize their actions and the whole organizational life. Uncertain situations are likely to make the managers realize the worth of defining problems as a key task for their professions and a mission for organizations (Pellizzoni, 2005; Schön, 1983). As a result, decision-making has to be meant as a process, not only an output as stressed by the paradigm of rational thinking (Crozier & Friedberg, 1981).

Social sciences have become increasingly interested in the plurality of rationalities governing actions and behaviors. Social and institutional identities are constructed through interaction, resulting in the establishment of devices and channels aimed at making respective interlocutors communicate. Political institutions are complex organizations coping with both standard procedures and missions of change and consequently, are placed in an exclusive space of intertwining instances, interests and powers. For these reasons, the increasing fragmentation of western societies reflected in the breach of dialogue between citizens and political institutions represents a key issue for both political institutions and scholars. The French school of psychosociology has interestingly fostered a dialogue with clinical sociology and aimed to make sense of the current context. The loss of "*universitas*" has made multiple and empty ethics proliferate in "*societas*" where people have become more and more isolated and objects of mass communication (Enriquez, 2008). The reverence for excellent performances, the transformation of the citizen in mere consumer, the reduction of long-term planning, the money seduction, as well as the social persuasion and the job exploitation put emphasis on the perverse connection between the destruction of professional vocation and the fragmentation of systems of belonging (Sainsaulieu, 1988). Labor force policies set perpetual mobility as a way to prevent the crystallization of interests and, as a result, end up preventing the constitution of stable work social links. In this sense, mobility is likely to correspond to dynamics of personnel's interchangeability, turning "change" into a strategic internal policy presented as a value to be accomplished. In public sector, for example, this factor is relevant in that lifelong career does not only represent a "material good" but also a symbolic one, and often a principal value expressing the organized and consolidated sacredness of the job (Bolognini, 1986). In the situation where agencies are contracted for short periods, outsourcing policies – in compliance with labor fluidity's principles and job mobility – can be considered either "constructive" when addressed to multiply public resources or "destructive" when conceived as resetting to zero "old public" with "new private" systems. Patterns of organizational authority are considered to become increasingly oriented to vanishing collective investment and leading people to lack of shared common references (Pagés, De Gaulejac, Bonetti, & Descendre, 1998). De Gaulejac (2005) argues that capitalist system has simultaneously imposed and justified people suffering, generating widespread social disorientation and angst. Yet new political devices are demanding public institutions to shift from questions concerning abstract transformations to questions assuming effective citizen-oriented changes.

Alors que la société semble prête à implorer du fait de l'exclusion d'un nombre de plus en plus élevé de personnes, il est temps de redéfinir des formes d'intervention des institutions sur les territoires en crise, afin de

réduire le décalage entre la demande sociale et les réponses institutionnelles (De Gaulejac, Bonetti, & Fraisse, 1995, p. 11)<sup>4</sup>.

The scenario is complex in that multiple internal and external agencies as well as social actors advocate for new effective political actions and towards this aim, more and more governing systems try to respond through innovative mechanisms. The analysis of the relationship between political institutions and civil society cannot underestimate the profound impact of these transformative dynamics at the organizational level of public sector. Any institutional change passes through cultural organizational changes that compel scientific research to focus on the very complexity of political institutions' identities. The conception and implementation of participatory processes represent a possible case of the "movement" of organizational sets through new connections between political institutions with civil society, as well as inside of the institutions themselves, through new functions undertaken by "old" and "new" agents of policymaking. On reformulating skills and competences in response to transformative contexts and political wills, these new mechanisms represent a unique prism through which to understand current challenges of democratic regimes. The establishment of new political commitment, as well as new administrative areas, roles and functions opens up new questions concerning margins of change. At the organizational level, political institutions are compelled bargaining new political commitment towards effective policymaking; at the cultural level, public institutions are demanded to reformulate the heritage of bureaucratic structure and standardized procedures.

### *A psychosociological perspective*

The participation of social actors in public policymaking creates new political and symbolical spaces that need to be analyzed in terms of change. New explorative thoughts and strategies are likely to be constructed through the implementation of devices aimed at reforming public policymaking and at the same time to construct new possible "semantics" of inclusive governance. Participatory policymaking could be seen as the byproduct of the multiple understandings and narratives constructed by interest groups, policy constituencies and scholars producing new potential frameworks and solutions for social problems. By restructuring settings of problems' definition and solution, new conditions for more complex models of policymaking are likely to be set up. The chance to make different forms of knowledge, know-how and power encounter implies the constitution of spaces where it is not one "truth" to be claimed, but rather the most plausible and shared vision to drive actions (Falanga, 2013a; Falanga & Antonini, 2013).

When psychosociology approaches political environments, it has to make a much-needed reference to the wide field of studies oriented to grasp the cultural worth of change of new actors and agencies. Culture is meant as a byproduct enrooted in processes of social construction providing different types and levels of legitimization to members' identity and actions (Barus-Michel, Enriquez, & Lévy, 2002; Carli & Paniccchia, 2003; Grasso & Salvatore, 1997; Kaneklin & Olivetti Manoukian, 2011). Understanding the construction of contingent rationales in public organizations as the status of collective and shared symbolical instances, psychosociology can contribute towards better understanding of both explicit and implicit rules of "games". Such rules cope incessantly with sorting out agreements and contradictions that can either reinforce or reverse organizational "basic assumptions" (Schein, 2009). With this respect, Carli and Paniccchia (1981) have proposed to take into consideration two co-existent psychological dimensions that characterize organizations: the "institutional" level expressing unconscious dynamics constructed and performed by the members, and the "organizational" level where social interactions are coordinated by means of rational devices. As the authors put it:

[l]a struttura sociale, quindi, può essere analizzata lungo il duplice livello organizzativo ed istituzionale e la dinamica simbolica, così com'è stata elaborata nell'ambito della teoria psicoanalitica, può dar ragione di queste due modalità di funzionamento dei sistemi trasformativi (Carli & Paniccchia, 1981, p. 141)<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> "As society seems ready to implode because of the exclusion of a constantly growing number of people, it is time to redefine the institutions' forms of intervention on crisis-hit territories, to reduce the gap between social demand and institutional answers."

The tension between such dimensions calls upon questions about the epistemic worthiness implied in any organizational change, even when apparently referring just to structural dimensions. Understanding organizational contexts as the expression of shared emotional symbolization, psychosociology provides interpretive models of reality making sense of the self-reflective knowledge produced by individuals and groups about their environment (Olivetti Manoukian, 2007). When understanding change as socially constructed, negotiated, and locally interpreted, participatory processes provide unique settings for these dynamics to be “exposed”: on the one hand, the decision to undertake interactive processes reveals political projects concerning administrations and contexts; on the other hand, the ways governments receive, elaborate, manage and work out such political projects reveals patterns of multiple relationships either sustaining or resisting to participatory processes. When participation does not take into consideration cultural dimension, it is likely to provide the fertile ground for awkward outcomes such as the “mythical” refusal of the past represented as “the problem”, and the idealization of the future, imaged as “the hope”.

Governments, like any organization, are likely to produce internal forms and forces of resistance to change so as to preserve the general equilibrium. Yet they are simultaneously demanded to tackle effective transformations in public policies’ formulation and implementation through participation. Whether explicitly or implicitly shared or claimed, forms of conflict or boycott reveal the cultural dimension of transforming routines, affecting interests and reframing imaginaries. When passing through defensive routines and norms, attempts to change reveal how deep the challenge to understand organizational cultures is (Janis, 1972). New rules of the game, new forms of control and also new “areas of freedom” may “worry” systems because they potentially question sources of power and possibly threaten spaces of autonomy. As Crozier and Friedberg (1981) put it:

[I]es rapports de force se transforment quand une capacité meilleure commence à faire ses prevues à travers une forme d’organisation nouvelle. Mais un changement de rapports de force n’entraîne pas nécessairement le développement d’une capacité nouvelle, et un changement de la nature et des règles du jeu: il pourra s’agir d’un simple renversement d’élites (Crozier & Friedberg, 1981, p. 392)<sup>6</sup>.

This point is especially relevant when considering participation as both process and potential organizational change, arising instances of systemic and interactive resistance (Kykyri, Puutio, Wahlstrom, 2010). Interestingly, Argyris and Lindblom (1994) have debated forms of resistance in unfreezing defensive patterns of organizational behavior, due to tacit assumptions on power of people. However, the same power is likely to impeding change. Argyris (1991; 1994) distinguishes between defensive and productive reasoning when concerned with producing results in policy statements. Even though the world of action is dynamic and uncertain, people are likely to feel more comfortable with false certainties generated by deterministic reasoning, and often resist evidence even when they disconfirm “theories-of-action”. Distinguished by “theories-in-use” for theories of action inferred from how people actually behave, the author has proposed a theory of organizational learning in terms of not questioning fundamental design, goals, and activities (single-loop), or coping with inhibition of change since people learn to communicate inconsistent messages by acting as if they are not inconsistent (double-loop). According to this perspective, people are likely to share convictions at an underground level and “cover-up” goals. The strength of emotion-based agreement is anything but an easy issue to deal with when lacking adequate conceptual theories and methods (Carli, 2006).

Participation implies making political and administrative actors open a space for negotiation and reformulation of identities, interests and objectives. It is evident that it opens to an emotional-based ambivalent situation where the defensive preservation of the past and the idealization of innovative futures

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<sup>5</sup> “The social structure, therefore, can be organizationally and institutionally analyzed. The symbolic level, as it has been developed within the framework of psychoanalytic theory, may account for these two modes of operation in transformative systems”.

<sup>6</sup> “The balances of power are transformed when a better capacity starts making its forecasts through a new form of organization. But a change in the balances of power does not necessarily lead to the development of a new capacity, and a change in the nature and rules of the game: it might be a simple reversal of elites.”

may end up shocking – at both organizational and cultural levels – with goals of change. The question is crucial, inasmuch as one of the critical points has been the bureaucratic segmentation of the problems to be tackled through “sectorialized” policymaking and the challenge of participatory processes to achieve a more integrated vision of social problems. Participatory processes demand the (re)organization of administrative levels, systems and connections in order to sustain their effective impact on inclusive measures of society in policymaking. At the level of formulation and implementation, it is necessary to look at the ways such processes are conceived in connection with the whole administrative architecture, as well as at the ways they either produce new models of work or reproduce “familiar” schemes of either bureaucratic or market-like fashions. My argument is that it is not a matter of imagining new models of organization, but rather to make the vertical and horizontal ways of working consistent with the exigencies of participatory policymaking. In this sense, the enactment of participation processes own a great potential in terms of public sector “reinvention” to be reflected onto new inclusive social policies’ measures. Change does not rely on the (re)production of organizational divisions, but rather on new agreements between representative elected officials and administrative units towards new models of relationship with civil society and marginal groups. In other words, it is not just a matter of organizational arrangements, but mainly and foremost a complex question concerning the institutional dimensions of political systems, evident in the ways they themselves go through traditional and innovative governance actions (Falanga, 2013b).

When we look at the ways participation is conceived and worked out, we are likely to understand where participation is placed in the mind of the political institution and, therefore, how identities and cultures are established and possibly redefined towards its enactment.

### ***A psychosociological action-research: the case of the Municipality of Lisbon***

It is essential to tackle attentive analyses of the political institutions, in order to grasp the ways participation is worked out and how cultural dimensions match organizational actions. In the last few decades, Portugal’s central public administration has been the subject of both comprehensive and sectorial reforms aimed at improving public sector. Mozzicafreddo and Gouveia (2011) argue that public administration reforms in Portugal are to be framed within the process of State modernization in the OECD area, which began in the middle of 1970s and whose main concerns have been: reduction of costs of administrative apparatus and financial resources for more efficiency; solution of dysfunctions in service organization, civil servants’ commitment, responsibility and accountability; and enhancement of quality in public service. The reorganization of the State after the dictatorial regime ended in 1974 has been especially concerned with improving welfare State measures and reforming professional workers’ categories. Some of the principal issues addressed by political institutions have regarded labor organization, performance control, coordination of procedures, codified administrative language, influence peddling, and permeating recruitment (cf. Salis Gomes, 2011).

In the 1990s, some forms of participatory experiences have been carried out by local administrations in partnership with citizens, in order to strengthen weak connections with political institutions in terms of increasing electoral disaffection. From 2007, the Mayor of the Municipality of Lisbon started promoting some interactive devices and since October 2008, a big debate has been running between executive and legislative powers in order to establish effective reforms of local administration. In 2007, the Municipality undertook a pivotal version of Participatory Budget and, at the end of May 2011, instituted the administrative unit “Division of Organizational Innovation and Participation” (DIOP). At an administrative level it has meant the creation of one division addressed to manage, on behalf of the overall mission of governance, initiatives concerning both innovation and participation. DIOP was inserted in the Department of modernization and information systems, while politically responding to the political area of “economy, innovation, administrative modernization and decentralization”. The DIOP was demanded to manage three participatory processes: Participatory Budget, Local Agenda 21 and Simplis (the latter concerning internal simplification and de-bureaucratization). In the same year the BIP/ZIP program for the enhancement of local partnerships intervening in priority parts of the city (“Bairros de Intervenção Prioritaria / Zonas de Intervenção Prioritaria”) was implemented in accordance with the critical areas identified between 2009 and 2010 by the “Local Housing Program”. The Bip/Zip program responds to both Local Housing Program



(PLH) and Municipal Direction of “Housing and Social Development”, as well as politically depending on the political area of “Housing, Social Development, Gebalis, Municipal arbitrary committee”.

In my PhD Thesis, my case-study has concerned the 2012 edition of the four mentioned participatory processes set out by the Municipality of Lisbon: Participatory Budget, Local Agenda 21, Simplis and Bip/Zip. The four processes are considered as participatory for opening the door of policymaking to new actors, though structured and methodologically developed in different ways. For this reason, the very transversal definition of “participation” should start by considering some principal organizational features regarding a number of principal aspects. First, both the administrative teams were created in 2011 in response to overall changes regarding the whole administrative apparatus. In this sense, the initiation of the two units has involved constituting new working groups concerned with participatory processes at different stages of their “history”. The Participatory Budget started in 2007 and at that time Lisbon was the first European capital to develop a participatory budget at the municipal level. Together with the Youth Participatory Budget, at its second edition in 2012, this type of process is addressed to place part of the budgetary amount for public investments in the hands of citizens who are allowed to propose and decide upon new projects that potentially fit principles and criteria for the € 2.5 millions of available budget. As regards the Local Agenda 21, EU has made explicit reference to the need to improve sustainability in national strategic plans for local development. The first edition in 2012 has represented a pivotal experience aimed to integrate environmental, social, cultural, economic and urban planning aspects. Through participatory forums, direct interaction with key community actors and enquiries to the population, Local Agenda 21 was settled only in the northern area of the city. Looking at the possibilities for participation to become a tool for internal improvement of the Municipality too, in 2008 the program Simplis was initiated in response to the national program “Simplex” aiming to consult internal officials on goals of debureaucratization and simplification. Finally, as regards the BipZip program, the key mission entails the enhancement of local partnerships among third sector organizations and, in some cases, with Parish Councils, in order to support urban regeneration. Projects are proposed and implemented by local partnerships which can rely on BipZip program supervision and financial support (total budget at hand of about €1 million for a provision of a range of between €5000 and €50,000 per project).

The enactment of participatory processes requires questioning intriguing organizational issues and undertaking complex cultural challenges. However scientific literature has been surprisingly limited on this issue. Assuming the key role played by public administration in participation as the core issue of my investigation in Lisbon, I have observed both back-office and frontline functions of administrative teams, as well as interviewed civil servants on their experiences with participation. My purpose was to explore their experiential knowledge through the observation of their work as well as through the analysis of their narratives drawn from the interviews. The design of the semi-structured interviews was based on the general topic “participation” and formulated through an open question. According to the “Emotional Analysis of Text” methodology (EAT), it implies grasping profound processes of symbolic representations set through collective instances that each individual expresses along the interview (Carli & Paniccia, 2002). Hence, after having interviewed 29 civil servants engaged in participatory processes in both back-office meetings and frontline interactions, I have set interpretive hypotheses concerning the resulting four Clusters and their relationship between and with the three Factorial Axes structuring the Factorial Space. In psychosociological terms, the Factorial Space is the symbolical space where the cultural instances expressed by the interviewees are organized. Carli and Paniccia (2002) define this space as “Local Culture” characterized by the articulation of Cultural Patterns that present themselves as clustered groups of co-occurring keywords. With regard to the interpretation of the four Cultural Patterns, it has implied analyzing each list of co-occurring keywords by considering both the etymological origins of the corresponding headwords and their emotional significance in psychological terms.

The EAT methodology has been part of the whole process of action research, and the interpretive analysis of the interviews has integrated the observation of both internal and external levels of the processes’ management. The outcomes of the analysis are to be interpreted according to psychosociological models and criteria. The findings of the action research inform about the different ways participation is symbolically represented by civil servants and opens a gateway for a new look at cultural dimensions emerging at the organizational level when innovative processes are undertaken by public authorities.

One of the four Cultural Patterns specifically shines a light on the argument explored in this article. On claiming the need of the organizational commitment for social inclusion, this Cultural Pattern makes a clear

point on the responsibility of governments with civil society's rights<sup>7</sup>. Social exclusion represents one of the main risks not only for the democratic system itself but for participation as well. Administrative mechanisms should be designed towards goals of social inclusion and be supported by clear political intentions. Democracy is seen as a system concerned with social equity and justice. It should not be surprising that the cultural pattern interrogates the proper pillars of participation when questioning administrative goals and capacities in terms of social inclusion and integration. The accomplishment of such a mission requires a relevant cultural effort in terms of governance in that it cannot rely on mere individual "sensitivity", either political or technical, but rather on integrated political projects. As a result, participatory processes should be considered as part of new political and administrative networks aimed at both solving specific cases of marginality and upholding the integration of social fabric.

This Cultural Pattern highlights the relation between effective administrative designs and democratic goals of participation<sup>8</sup>. On the one hand the integration of administrative networks of policymaking is functional for effective outcomes. On the other hand social inclusion is meant as the democratic result of human integrity and civil society's rights relying on integrated visions of communities. The two instances are not independent one and other. The very evidence provided by this Cultural Patterns is the link that is explicitly made between the administrative operationalization of participation and the achievement of goals of social inclusion. Public authority and society cannot be seen as separated actors eventually gathered within new random deliberative arenas. The risk at stake is that of conceiving participation as the "just" technique expected to solve punctual social "dysfunctions". When not entailing the whole governance system, single processes risk fostering very high expectations of total change (i.e. myth of bad past to be overtaken through the achievement of good future) which are unlikely to be accomplished. Participation, in the view of civil servants, is rather demanded to be a byproduct of new political and administrative networks displaying a clear role in preventing phenomena of social isolation and marginalization. The demand for administrative coordination bridges the demand for place-based integration. Political institutions are demanded to enact participation with internal goals of broad policymaking coordination towards external goals of territorial integration. In this sense, the co-existence of short-term and long-term policies could be hopefully improved by setting new synergic systems of multi-level participation. Different actors and different sectors of public administration could turn participation into the grassroots rationale moving the implementation of new governance devices. Integration of innovative processes within the administrative organization and inclusion of new decision-makers from civil society are all but independent or even conflicting goals of participation. These findings confirm that participatory initiatives should not be isolated within the political systems since they need adequate networks to work out their goals of change. Furthermore, the proper mission cannot help but entailing democratic goals of equity, justice and therefore social inclusion. Pursuing new organizational and institutional forms (and reforms) does represent one of the most challenging aims for participatory policymaking. It requires integrated political planning while "upsetting" the administrative rationale towards extensive changes in the relationship with civil society.

### *Conclusive reflections: towards what change?*

By looking at participation as a varied set of initiatives that are committed worldwide to deal with scenarios in transformation, I argue that participation reveals the challenging and overlapping interaction between dimensions of tradition and innovation for new political measures and initiatives. The settlement of

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<sup>7</sup> The final result of the EAT provides four different Cultural Patterns, each of them putting evidence on specific emotional aspects revealed through the interviews. Apart from the one described in this article, the other three clusters have synthetically highlighted: the need to tackle organizational reforms while considering civil servants as key contributors for change when promoting participation; the role played by effective participatory designs in including civil servants as active part of the processes; the (new) political concern of civil servants with governance actions at both local and over-local scales (for more details, cf: Falanga, 2013a).

<sup>8</sup> The keywords emerged in this Cultural Pattern are: survive (sobreviver), cycle (ciclo), son (filho), parents (pais), civil (civil), homeless (sem abrigo), religion (religão), buy (comprar), family (família), live (viver), media (middle), menina (girl), class (classe), (durg addict (toxicodependente).

participatory processes understood as an innovative device aimed at gathering new actors of policymaking cannot help but generating ambivalent emotions, desires and fears related to the maintenance of known equilibrium and the pursuit of unknown futures. Such “in-between” conditions can and must be studied by psychosociology since the discipline has been committed for decades with contexts in change. Indeed, psychosociology provides an integrated theoretical framework and a lively set of methodologies addressed to analyze, understand and extract interpretive hypotheses concerning cultural changes. Towards this aim it is necessary to adopt conceptual frameworks and methodologies that allow observing changes brought about by participation. It is also necessary that such frameworks were able to look through the normative and organizational mutations of governance systems so as to link them with what is unexpressed or what it is expressed but hardly comprehensible without the right theories and methods. My approach of investigation is concerned with analyzing forms of knowledge and know-how carried by the multiple agencies and actors who have a relevant impact in signifying their contexts. In the case of participation, I have had the opportunity to go through and beyond administrative members’ narratives and provide new evidence on what moves change-oriented governance initiatives.

Towards the aim, I have focused on the administrative level which is demanded to turn participation an operational device for effective governance. In 2012 I have developed an action/research involving the four participatory processes promoted by the Municipality of Lisbon. By following both internal and external work of the administrative teams as well as by interviewing the 29 civil servants engaged in the processes, I have presented in this article some of the results of the analysis. One of the Cultural Patterns emerged through the interpretive analysis of the collected narratives, makes thorough reference to what enacting democratic goals of social inclusion implies from their point of view. Assuming social inclusion as a democratic goal and expecting that, as such, political systems should take it into account when promoting participation, it requires serious consideration at the organizational level. There is no social inclusion without administrative integration of the administrative agencies working on public policymaking which, in turn, should be supported by clear political intentions on the goals of participation.

New interactive policymaking processes can be seen as one of the possible expressions of change in political institutions. The contribution of psychosociology intersecting the commitment with organizational development and new participatory policymaking processes can provide new knowledge on cultural challenges. When matching such knowledge with the insights stemming from new methods and interdisciplinary perspectives to studies concerning policy innovations and public administration changes, new complex understanding on participatory processes are likely to be achieved. As illustrated with the case of Lisbon in this article, participation is demanded to put in relation goals of social inclusion with new administrative settings and ways of working together. Organizational integration has a direct effect on the ways public policies, including the participatory ones, are formulated and worked out. It is by bridging these two dimensions that, more generally, we are likely to increase critical knowledge on the ways political institutions work towards goals of social inclusion.

Participation owns the potential to encourage shared reflection and self-reflection by (re)narrating the multiple stories of political institutions and societies. The inclusion of marginalized and excluded social actors and groups into innovative processes implies conceiving new organizational and cultural ways through which political institutions can set up effective processes. The complex set of instances connected with effective political measures makes a case in point on changes carried on by processes needing a broader cultural change supported by public organizations.

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